

Random Auto Checks Held After Night Stalker Attack

By NANCY WRIDE,
Times Staff Writer

Responding to "hundreds and hundreds of phone calls since Sunday from fearful residents," Orange County Sheriff Brad Gates on Tuesday said deputies are randomly stopping suspicious-looking motorists and bolstering neighborhood patrols to reduce the chance of a second attack in the county by a killer dubbed the Night Stalker.

"We hope we can be successful in preventing another attack," Gates said at a press conference, referring to the serial killer who on Sunday morning shot Mission Viejo resident Bill Carns in the head and raped his girlfriend.

The Sunday attack, which occurred about 2:40 a.m. at the couple's Chrisanta Drive home, was the first in Orange County by the Stalker, who has been linked to 14 slayings and 21 attacks in California.

In Critical Condition

Carns remained hospitalized in critical condition Tuesday. Gates said that the man's condition had improved slightly. His girlfriend, who has not been identified, is under armed guard, a sheriff's spokesman said.

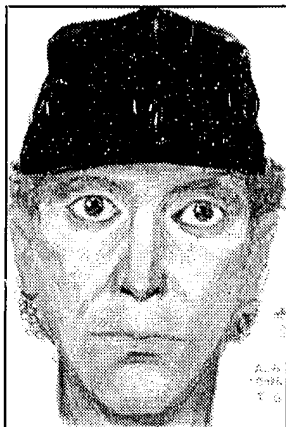
In other developments:

- Authorities on Tuesday released a slightly modified description of the killer, based, Gates said, on information the Mission Viejo woman provided. The killer—described by authorities as 6 feet tall, in his 20s or 30s with curly hair and gapped and stained teeth—is now said to have "a little bit straighter hair," Gates said.

The new composite sketch shows the killer wearing a black baseball cap, which Los Angeles detectives believe he has frequently worn while committing 14 murders and 21 assaults since February.

Los Angeles Police Department spokesman Cmdr. William Booth declined to say why the cap was included in the updated drawing, except to note that "at times, he's been seen wearing a baseball cap. It's not something he just started wearing."

L.A. County Sheriff's Lt. Dick Walls said that the Stalker may have left a similar cap March 17 in the Rosemead condominium where he is believed to have killed his



A police sketch of the killer.

first victim. Authorities said that a navy blue cap found at the murder scene had a silver patch embroidered in red. The patch depicted a lightning bolt and the letters "AC-DC"—the name of a popular heavy metal rock band.

- Investigators in Los Angeles and Orange counties issued an appeal to the public for any information on an automobile spotted by a witness in Mission Viejo on Sunday. Authorities believe the car may be a 1976 orange Toyota station wagon with the license plate "482 RTS." The car was reported stolen Saturday night in Chinatown.

- Dental charts of a possible suspect are to be delivered to about 800 Orange County dentists with the hope that one of them will recognize them and provide information about the killer.

At his press conference Tuesday, during which he stressed public awareness, Gates called the Stalker—also known as the Valley Intruder—"an unorthodox serial killer" and pointed out that "due to the Night Stalker's . . . random selection process, we do not know where he will strike next." But he said the serial killer generally "strikes in the early morning hours . . . near freeways" and advised citizens to take several precautions to "decrease the chance of a second incident."

While acknowledging Southern California's recent heat spell, Gates

advised residents to lock all the doors and windows of their homes and cars. He also suggested that shrubbery around residential windows be trimmed.

Gates urged citizens to "be good neighbors" and report on the 911 emergency phone line or to the county Sheriff's Department (834-3000) any suspicious people, cars or activity such as dogs barking in their communities, even if those occurrences seem "unimportant."

Noting that the "greatest source" of investigative information often comes from the public, Gates asked that citizens act as the eyes and ears in their neighborhoods, adding that extra staff has been assigned to answer what has already been an influx of calls. (Sheriff's spokesman Lt. Dick Olson said the department gets perhaps three or four calls about prowlers or suspicious circumstances on any given night but received 76 such calls Monday night, including reports of "eight doors being open.")

'Increased Patrols'

In communities where there is no existing Neighborhood Watch program, Gates added: "I suggest you consider joining or forming one."

Since Sunday, Gates said, "we have greatly increased patrols" during late evening and early morning hours in unincorporated county areas for which the Sheriff's Department provides law enforcement. The hours the department's helicopters normally patrol have been extended, Gates said, and its Career Criminal Apprehension Team (which specializes in the investigation of such repeat-type crimes as burglary, auto theft and robbery) has been assigned additional patrols.

Additionally, Gates said, patrol deputies randomly "will be stopping cars in the late night and early morning hours" if the car resembles the one seen near the serial killer's most recent attack in Mission Viejo or a motorist fits the Stalker's description. "Anybody my officers feel fit the circumstances" will be stopped, Gates explained. He said he recognized the roadside checks would be an "inconvenience," but asked that the public have patience and try to

Please see 'STALKER', Page 4



MARK BOSTERS / Los Angeles Times

Sheriff Brad Gates warns public to keep doors, windows locked.

STALKER: Roadside Checks

Continued from Page 1

appreciate the necessity in the wake of the Sunday assaults, the 34th and 35th linked to the Stalker.

Department spokesman Olson said later that cars have been stopped since Sunday. But he did not know how many.

Other county law enforcement agencies have not been asked or encouraged to conduct the roadside checks, Olson said Monday, nor to the best of his knowledge have they been doing so voluntarily.

Gates said on Monday that information that led to the specific description of the orange car originated from a witness who reported seeing a similar vehicle near the Mission Viejo home, but he would not comment on whether the car has been linked to Stalker killings. He and other department officials also would not comment on reports that the car was seen near the home before the attack.

Authorities said the orange car sought in connection with the latest attack was stolen Saturday night in Chinatown while its owner dined in a restaurant.

A disproportionate number of

the killer's victims have been of Asian heritage. But a Los Angeles County Sheriff's spokesman said no particular significance has been placed on the car being stolen while parked in Chinatown.

A source close to the Orange County investigation said that the witness in Mission Viejo provided investigators with the partial license plate "482 T."

Gates said that the Orange 1976 Toyota "is the car we want to find."

Bill Gregory, 56, of West Hollywood, owner of the Toyota, said that his car was stolen Saturday between 9:30 and 10:10 p.m. It was parked on Cottage Home Drive near the Pasadena Freeway in Chinatown.

Times staff writers Mark Landsbaum and David Freed contributed to this story.